

develop near the old stage stop.

The Postoffice Department in 1856 wrote a letter of complaint to Jim Trotter, stage coach driver, over his delay in getting the mail across Cheat Mountain west of Travelers Repose. His terse reply was in these words: If the gable end of hell would blow out and rain fire and brimstone for forty days and forty nights it would not be sufficient to melt the snow drifts on Cheat Mountain.

Louise McNeill has written poems about this incident and about Travellers Repose. I quote them here merely to show how well she describes real incidents in her native Pocahontas. These of course could not be published with out permission.

JED KANE

The Gauley mail was overdue
When Jed who was to drive it through
Cheat Mountain Pass to Staunton Run
Got special word from Washington
In which a postal clerk inquired
Why Mr. Kane who had been hired
To drive the course at post haste rate
Was not in yet, though three months late.

And now on a high-glaze marble wall
In the postal building Jed ^AKanes scrawl
Hangs framed in silver: "Respected Sir,
You ask the reason and this be her-
If the gable end blew out of hell
Straight into the drifts of a snow that fell
Last fall on the ram's horn point of Cheat
It would take till Easter for brimstone heat.
To melt a horsepath, So I remain

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THE COMPLETE WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

Vivid Description of Droop Mountain Battle Reprinted From Pen of Andrew Price

Historic Battlefield Is Converted Into State Park

On a bleak day last November, State and National officials together with a large group of State citizens gathered at the Droop Mountain battlefield in Pocahontas County—72 years after Union forces routed the Confederate cavalry from the field—to dedicate the site of that conflict as a State park.

Private George Alderson of the 14th Virginia Cavalry went to the celebration from the hills of Nicholas County to accept the new State park as a memorial to his comrades who fell there. The boys in blue were absent. The last member of the G. A. R. in the Pocahontas section died last March so a World War veteran accepted the flag in their behalf.

This dedication—and renewed interest in the site together with its historical background—brings to mind the colorful description of the famous Droop Mountain encounter as chronicled by the late Andrew Price, famed State newspaperman and one of the first honored with a place in the West Virginia Publishers' Hall of Fame. Price was for many years editor of the Pocahontas Times, now edited by his brother, Cal Price.

His narrative of the battle follows:

The campaign in 1863, in West Virginia, on the Federal side, was under the command of Gen. W. W. Averell, of the Fourth Separate Brigade. He had at his disposal some five thousand troops and he was opposed to an army of about the same strength. The campaign in the mountains has been ignored by historians generally, the broken country of high hills and narrow valleys prevented the maneuvering of large bodies of troops, but it was no less important than the vast armies on the tidewater plains, for West Virginia was a barrier between the North and the South that the government must hold at all hazards. The Federal forces had met with disaster until Averell took charge in the spring of 1863. He was a New Yorker, a West Pointer, country-bred and efficient. He had won his spurs in subduing the Kiowa nation. He could move his troops faster than any other commander, unless it was "Stonewall" Jackson, of the Confederate army.

When he came to West Virginia, the first thing he did was to mount his infantry upon horses and after that he was able to move his army with great rapidity and he moved up and down the long valleys on either side of the Allegheny at will. He was in many engagements, but the great battle was that of Droop

Mountain, thirty-four miles from Lewisburg and that if he drove his enemy forward that day that they would get by Lewisburg before Duffie would have arrived from Kanawha.

On Thursday then about all that was done was to try to go around the Confederates and cut them off from the mountain, but Jackson beat them to it and left the Levels to be occupied by Averell.

Stays With Confederates

Averell made his headquarters camp along the hill on the western edge of the Levels about where Gen. M. J. McNeal, of the Confederate veterans, resides. Averell, himself, was the guest of Col. Paul McNeal that night, and the whole community was Confederate but all who met him were charmed by him.

When the Levels was a lake Droop Mountain was the dam. The Greenbrier forced a passage through along the extreme eastern side and still plunges through the pass. Last summer the road commission blocked this road just as the army did in '63, and we who desired to march south had to either go down the river road on the right or to the left and climb the ridge and swing round the circle by way of Lobella and climb up the road that intersects the pike on top of the mountain back of the battlefield. They call these Hobson Choice detours these days.

Averell Detoured

So Averell detoured. Like "Stonewall" Jackson, he was an early riser, and he got his troops into position before daylight. Here is the way he laid out his attack:

He sent the 14th Pennsylvania to the left and they took up their stand near the Locust Creek bridge and appeared to be ready to charge up the mountain. Keeper's battery was placed on the high ground above Beard's mill and commenced to fire on the batteries on top of the mountain. Several families living in the low place formed by Locust creek stayed there all day under the artillery fire. Ewing's battery was placed to the left pike between Hillsboro and the foot of Droop Mountain. Gibson's battalion and the 10th West Virginia were held in or near Hillsboro on the pike. The 2nd, 3rd, and 8th West Virginia regiments were placed to the right of the pike about the Renick place, out of sight of the Confederates on top of the mountain. The 28th Ohio Volunteer Infantry and one company of the 14th Pennsylvania, in all 1,175 men, were sent by the long and mile detour to the right by Lobella, and while they started long before daylight they did not reach the battlefield until 1:45 p. m. In the meantime a great deal of cannon firing had been going on.

I imagine that something occurred during the slow morning hours that caused Averell the gravest apprehension. He had not attacked the day before for good and sufficient reasons, but about 9 o'clock the Confederates announced by cheers, and by band music, and by the display of battle flags, that Major General Echols had brought his army up and that the forces were equal and that the Confederates held a safe position.

I have given the position of the Federal troops, occupying a full half circle to the north of the battlefield. Here is the way the Confederates were stationed:

Gives Locations

On the river road to Greenbrier: Edgar's battalion. On the farmland on the brow of the mountain where the battle was fought: 22nd Virginia cavalry, Col. George Patton; 19th Virginia cavalry, Col. W. P. Thompson; 20th Virginia Cavalry, Col. W. W. Arnett; 14th Virginia cavalry, Col. James Cochran; Derrick's battalion; Jackson's batteries. On the Lobelia-Jacob road: Nobody. The failure to guard the road leading in from the rear cost the Confederates the battle. This oversight has never been explained.

At 1:45 p. m. the flanking party arrived and came through the woods firing as they came and the rifle balls fell everywhere. It is said to have been one of the most sudden and most fearful fires that men were ever subject to. In about an hour, the Confederates were in full flight.

As soon as Averell heard his flanking party commence to fire he moved the 2nd, 3rd, and 8th regiments obliquely to the right up the mountain. The horses had been left at the foot of the mountain. They came out on top of the mountain exactly on the left of the flanking army and together they advanced on the breastworks of the Confederates and the fight was over in a few minutes, and the army in full retreat. Averell sent Gibson's battalion after them up the pike, together with one section of Ewing's battery. But parts of all the regiments joined in the pursuit, and Averell was able to halt his command on the top of Spring Creek Mountain, overlooking the Big Levels of Greenbrier. This was the evening after the battle, Friday, November 6, 1863.

Successful in Retreat

He tried to hold back the pursuit so that Duffie might cut them off at Lewisburg, but that was not to be. They got through Lewisburg and on towards Union on the way to Dublin, by a matter of minutes, and were able to cut a timber blockade in the road.

We Confederates never had any luck in West Virginia after the battle of Droop Mountain. It was a losing fight from that time on. We had given Averell a defeat at White Sulphur Springs the summer before, but with that exception, Averell never lost a game. He was allowed to continue in command until the 23rd day of September, 1864, with the most brilliant record for success and efficiency that was ever accorded to a general in a campaign, when

at Lewisburg

first week of November, ordered General Duffie to march at 2 p. m. November 7 at Lewisburg, and Duffie marched on Kanawha, 120 miles. Averell fled from Beverly and had 110 miles to go. Averell reached Lewisburg on Saturday, November 7, at 2 p. m., and found that Duffie had got there at 10 a. m.

Sunday they started from Beverly and came over Cheat Mountain by way of Cheat Bridge, and marched by Camp Bartow, where they left the Staunton and Parkersburg turnpike and took the road leading by Greenbank to Huntersville. Outside of some apprehension from brushwhackers, they saw no sign of the rebel army until they got to Greenbank and from there one they drove the pickets before them.

Reach Huntersville

They reached Huntersville on Wednesday at noon and there Averell heard that Col. W. P. Thompson with the 19th Virginia cavalry, was at Marlins Bottom, at the Greenbrier bridge. Huntersville was the county seat, and while the pike between the Levels and the county seat ran by Marlins Bottom where the river was bridged, all persons attending court on horseback from the Levels, when the river could be forded turned to left at Shephen Hole Run and rode by the Beaver Creek route. They saved by this about six miles—the distance from Marlins Bottom to Huntersville. Marlins Bottom is now called Marlinton. So on Wednesday there was a horse race. Averell sent the 14th Pennsylvania cavalry and the 3rd West Virginia Mounted Infantry down Beaver Creek to cut off Thompson at Shephen Hole Run, and sent the 2nd and 8th West Virginia mounted Infantry to Marlinton with Ewing's battery, but Thompson left in a hurry and cut a barricade of trees across the road on Price Hill, and beat the Federals to Shephen Hole Run and joined up with the Confederate troops in the Levels and there turned and stopped the advance. Averell, at Huntersville, got word in the night time from his command at Marlinton and from Shephen Hole Run, that Thompson had escaped the trap.

Join at Mill Point

Averell moved his Huntersville army down Beaver Creek, Thursday, starting at 3 a. m., and reaching Mill Point at 8 a. m. He had ordered the colonel in charge of the Marlinton army to cut out the barricade and join him at Mill Point, and both wings of the army arrived at the same time. The effect of this was to put the Confederates in motion and they retired from the plains around Hillsboro to the heights overlooking that town, and erected embankments and fortifications on the brow of the mountains overlooking the Levels where the pike tops the mountain going south. It is exactly at the point that the tourist having traveled north through the three miles of sand on the flat top of Droop Mountain, comes in sight all at once of the garden spot of West Virginia spread out some fifteen hundred feet below him. It is a breath taking experience.

Averell says that the reason that he did not attack on Thursday when he came upon the Confederates in the Levels was that he was

and
cripples.

for no reason, so far as history can discover, he was summarily dismissed from his command. He openly charged that it was to make room for some favorite in the make-up of the army.

Quits Command

His last official communication to his command closed with these words: "I would rather serve in your ranks than leave you, but I am only permitted to say farewell."

During his command with the Confederate rangers lasting from May 16, 1863, to September 23, 1864, he fought twenty battles.

That is the outline of the Battle of Droop Mountain. We most earnestly insist that if this sketch is in any wise in error that the historian or veteran will immediately write to us and we will argue it out.

Here is the panorama that would have been presented to an observer standing on the brow of the mountain on the battlefield just before the battle began: To the east, 14th Pennsylvania regiment; to the northeast, Keeper's battery; to the north, Ewing's battery, the 10th West Virginia, and Gibson's battalion; to the northwest, behind the timber and in the sinks and hollows of the land, the 2nd, 3rd and 8th West Virginia regiments, lying on their arms, every fourth man holding horses, all waiting for the sound of battle. To the west the timber forest through which the 28th Ohio and the company of cavalry were sent upon the rear. All the Levels' homes were occupied that day by the women and children. Nearly all the non-combatant men were hiding in the woods.